THE SHRINES OF SITAKUND.

THE

SHRINES OF SITAKUND

IN THE DISTRICT OF

CHITTAGONG IN BENGAL

BY

ADHARLAL SEN, B. A.

DEPUTY COLLECTOR OF CALCUTTA, FORMERLY OF CHITTAGONG. LATE SCHOLAR, PRESIDENCY COLLEGE; MEMBER OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL; AUTHOR OF "LALITA SUNDARI," "MENAKA," "NALINI," "KUSUM KANAN," AND "LYTTONIANA;" FELLOW OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA.

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TO

Charles H. Tawney, Esq., M. A.

PRINCIPAL OF THE PRESIDENCY COLLEGE;

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL; AND
REGISTRAR OF THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

WHO HAS BEEN MORE THAN A FATHER TO ME.

THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED

As a Token of my gratefulness, and of my reverence for his genius and learning.

PREFACE.

I visited Sitakund in 1880, during the *Siva-Chaturdasi* festival. From the notes then recorded by me, I wrote a paper on the Shrines of the place, which was read before the Asiatic Society of Bengal on the 2nd March, 1881. This paper, with some additions and alterations, is now presented before the public.

It was owing to the kindness of the late Pandit Bhairava Chandra Nyayaratna of Chittagong, that I was able to obtain copies of some of the sacred writings to which reference is made in the following pages. To my old and revered tutor, Pandit Haris Chandra Kaviratna, of the Presidency College, my thanks are also due for his kindly going through the proof-sheets, and helping me with his suggestions.

A. S.

Calcutta, June 15th, 1884.

THE

SHRINES OF SITAKUND.

Sítákund is an outpost in the Police circle of Kumiria attached to the Sudder Subdivision of the district of Chittagong in Bengal. It is bounded on the east by the Sitakund range, on the west by the Bay of Bengal, on the north and south by the Kumiria and Merkaserai thanas respectively, the population by the last Census being 36,581 souls.

The city of the same name (lat. 22° 37′ 55″; long. 91° 43′ 40″), which is at a distance of 24 miles to the north of the Sudder Station, is not mentioned by name in the Ayeen Akbery; but it appears to have been a place of considerable importance at the time when Chittagong first came into the possession of the English. Mr. Harry Verelst, the first Chief of Chittagong, who afterwards succeeded Mr. Vansittart in the Governorship of Bengal, reported his arrival from this place on the 3rd January, 1761.* Lord

* Mr. Cotton's Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong, page 5.

Teignmouth visited it in 1778,* and Sir William Jones in 1786.† It was also inspected and described by Captain Pogson in 1831,‡ and Sir Joseph Hooker in 1854.§ Sitakund still continues to hold its position as a place of note in the district. It has a *moonsifee* of its own, which, though still going by its name, has, however, been recently removed to an adjacent place. The trade of Sitakund is not inconsiderable, lying as it does on the Grand Trunk Road between Dacca and Chittagong, which is always fit for wheeled traffic, and being accessible within a short distance by boats throughout the year. There is not certainly a more beautiful place on earth. Nature has adorned it with all that is sublime and beautiful in creation. It is a meet residence for gods. The grand mountains, the beautiful waterfalls, the volcanic springs, the clear streams, the thick forests, and their conflagrations at night, the numberless odorous flowers, the fragrant breeze and the sweet song of birds,—these no one can forget, who has once been there.

* Lord Teignmouth's Memoirs of Sir William Jones, Vol. II, p. 55.

† Ibid. Letter from Sir William Jones to Mr. Justice Hyde.

‡ Pogson's Narrative during a Tour to Chateegaon, p. 204. The date of Pogson's visit to Sitakund, as given by the late Dr. Oldham, quoting Corbyn, in his paper on the Thermal Springs of India edited by his son, is 1778. (*Vide* p. 59, Part II, Vol. XIX. Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India.) But this is not correct, as will be seen from Captain Pogson's own Narrative. It was Lord Teignmouth who visited the place in 1778.

§ Hooker's Himalayan Journals, Vol. II, p. 352.

It is, however, from a religious point of view, that the place is held in the greatest esteem. In Eastern Bengal, which is condemned by the orthodox as the Mleçcha country, not visited by the Pándavas (পাণ্ডববর্জিতদেশ), there is no place so renowned as Sitakund. It is one of the 51 sacred *Píthas* (পীঠ),* on which fell scattered the limbs of Satí, the consort of Siva, whose dead body was cut to pieces by the discus of Vishnu. "On Chandrasekhara in Chittagong in Eastern Bengal," says the *Ádipurána*,† "there is a place of great sanctity, which

* चट्टले दक्षबाहुर्मे भैरवश्चन्द्रशेखरः ।
बह्मरूपा भगवती भवानी तत्र देवता ॥
इति तन्त्रचूड़ामणौ शिवपार्व्वतीसंवादे
एकपञ्चाशद्विद्योत्पत्तौ पीठनिर्णयः ।

Vide Sir Raja Radhakanta Deva's Sabdakalpadruma, Vol. III, p. 2150, and Vol. VII, p. 702 (supplement) 1st Edition.

চট্টগ্রামে ডানিহস্ত অর্দ্ধ অনুভব ।
ভবানী দেবতা চন্দ্রশেখর ভৈরব ॥
ভারতচন্দ্র রায়েরু অন্নদামঙ্গল ।
শুক্রবারের ১ম নিশা পালা ।

Date of composition of *Annadámangala*, S. 1674=1753 A. D.

বেদ লয়ে ঋষি রসে বুঝ নিরূপিলা ।
সেই শকে এই গীত ভারত রচিলা ॥

† देवाभिलषितं चेत्तं वरप्राक् चास्ति मैत्रजे ।
अतिगुह्यं महत्पुण्यं चट्टले चन्द्रशेखरे ॥

Ádipurána, *Vide*. p. 105 Chandrasekhara Máhátmya by Uma Charan Mookerjea.

is the favourite and secret resort of the gods." "We have heard before," the Rishis said in the *Devípuráṇa*,* "of Sitakund situate on the mount of Chandrasekhara, a spring known throughout India, which is the purifier of the three worlds". "Ayodhya, Muttra, Maya (Hurdwar), Benares, Kánchi (Conjeveram), Avanti (Ojjein), and Dwáraká—these seven places are the dispensers of salvation. In Benares, Maináka, Ekámravana (Bhubanesvara), Kailás and Sumeru, Siva constantly dwells. During the Kali Yuga," says Vishnu to his consort, in the *Váráhí Tantra*,† "Chittagong is the habitation of the gods." So again Siva said in the *Linga Purana*,‡ "I shall dwell with thee, O

* सीताकुण्डं श्रुतं पूर्वं चैलोक्यजनपावनं ।
चन्द्रशेखरमध्यस्थं भारताभ्याससमन्वितम् ॥
इति श्रीदेवीपुराणे चैत्रमाहात्म्ये चण्डिकाखण्डे शिवरहस्य-
कथने श्रीश्रीचन्द्रशेखरप्राप्तिरहस्यादशोऽध्यायः ।

† अयोध्या मथुरा माया काशी काञ्ची अवन्तिका ।
पुरी द्वारावती चैव सप्तैता मुक्तिदायिकाः ॥
वाराणसी च मैनाक एकाम्रवनमेव च ।
कैलासरत्नमाद्रिश्च स्वर्णाद्रिश्चक्रपुष्करः ॥
एतेषु शङ्करो नित्यं वसेद्देवीसमन्वितः ।
काशी स्थानञ्च सर्वेषां देवानां परमे शुभे ॥
इति श्रीवाराहीतन्त्रे श्रीनारायणनारायणीसंवादे
तृतीयः पटलः ।

‡ लोकानाञ्च हितार्थाय वत्स्ये चन्द्रशेखरे ।
त्वया सह वसिष्यामि सत्यं सत्यं वरानने ॥

* Linga Purana, *Vide*. p. 105, Chandrasekhara Máhátmya by Uma Charan Mookerjea.

fair-faced one, on Chandrasekhara in Bengal for the good of men." The sanctity of the shrines of Sitakund is a favourite theme with the writers of the Puranas and Tantras, and passages bearing on the subject need not be multiplied. The shrines attract pilgrims from all parts of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, as also from the North-Western Provinces. The Siva-Chaturdasí festival, according to Dr. Hunter,* is attended by ten to twenty thousand pilgrims. The minor gatherings, at the eclipses of the sun and moon, and at like occasions, number from two to four thousand devotees.

The leading works which treat of these shrines are (1) *Devípuráṇa*, (2) *Váráhí Tantra*, (3) *Çhinnayastá Tantra*. Passing mention of them may also be found in the following works: *Ádipurana*, *Linga Purana*, *Ádi Brahma Purana*, *Churámani Tantra*, *Yogini Tantra*, *Váyu Purana*, *Bhavishya Purana*, *Tantrasára*, and *Kálimáhátmya*. A passage "अमरनाथश्चन्द्रनाथश्चन्द्रशेखरपर्व्वते" is generally referred to the *Amarakosha*. In Colebrooke's excellent edition of the Dictionary, I searched for the passage in vain, but have succeeded in tracing it to the *Mahálingesvara Tantra* in the prayer of a hundred names addressed to Siva. The exact age, in which the aforesaid Tantras and Puranas were written, cannot be ascertained. According to Dr. Monier Williams, "if the oldest known Purana is not older than the sixth or

* *Vide* Hunter's Statistical Account of Chittagong, p. 232.

seventh century, an earlier date can scarcely be attributed to the oldest known Tantra."* There is no mention of Chittagong, or of the shrines of Sitakund, either in the *Rámáyana*, or in the *Mahábhárata*. According to Dr. Hunter,† there is mention in the latter epic of Trilochana, a powerful king of Tipperah, who is supposed to have been contemporary with Yudhishthira; but I have failed to trace it, though I came across two passages which speak of the conquest of that kingdom by Sahadeva and Karna.‡ We also know that the early kings of Tipperah were staunch Sivaites, and that a portion of the expenses of the Sitakund shrines is still defrayed by the Tipperah Raj.§ Dr. Hunter‖ has also informed us, that "in 1512 the Tipperah General conquered Chittagong." But when these shrines, now so cele-

* Dr. Monier Williams's Indian Wisdom, page 504.

† Hunter's Statistical Account of Hill Tipperah, page 464.

‡ त्रैपुरं खवशे कृत्वा राजानमभितोजसम् ।
निजग्राह महावाजस्तरसा पौरवेश्वरम् ॥ ५८॥
इति सभापर्वणि दिग्विजयपर्वणि सहदेवदिग्विजये ·
एकचिंशत्तमोऽध्यायः ।
मोदनं पतनञ्चैव चिपुरां कोशलां तथा ।
एतान् सर्वान् विनिर्जित्य करमादाय सर्वशः ॥ ९ ॥
दक्षिणां दिशमास्थाय कर्णो जित्वा महारथान् ।
दक्षिणं दाक्षिणात्येषु घोषयामास वृतजः ॥ १० ॥
इत्यारण्यके पर्वणि घोषयात्रापर्वणि कर्णदिग्विजये
त्रिपञ्चाशदधिकद्विशततमोऽध्यायः ।

§ Baboo Kailas Chandra Sinha's Chronicles of Tipperah, p. 5.

‖ Hunter's Statistical Account of Hill Tipperah, p. 465.

brated, were first established, has not yet been determined. It is remarkable that they were not visited by Hwen Thsang, the Chinese traveller, nor even by the great Chaitanya who is known to have made a pilgrimage to all the known shrines of his time. There can, however, be no doubt as to their recent establishment. Most of the shrines are supposed to have become endued with merit, only in the Kali Yuga. Among the springs mentioned by Captain Pogson in 1831, is Chandur or Chandra Kund, "said to have appeared within the last four months."* In a list of objects of antiquarian interest issued by the Government of Bengal, it is said that the temple of Sambhunath was built about 450 years ago, and that of Ḍárabakunda about 400 years ago, but on what evidence I cannot say.†

Sitakund (Spring of Sita) derives its name from a spring consecrated to Sita, the deified heroine of the *Rámáyana*. The spring, however, is no longer in existence. A tradition prevails, that there was at one time a dispute between the followers of Vishnu and Siva about the possession of the spring, and that the dispute was referred for arbitration to one Kali Charan Roy, a zemindar and dewan in the

* Captain Pogson's Narrative during a Tour to Chateegaon, p. 204.

† A List of the Objects of Antiquarian Interest in the Lower Provinces of Bengal compiled at the Bengal Secretariat under the orders of the Government of India, 1879.

local Collectorate,* who, it is said, caused the spring to be filled up to terminate the difference. According to another account, the destruction of the spring was effected by the then Mohunta of Sitakund. The present Mohunta informed me that he had made several attempts to restore the sacred place, but that, though he had dug deep all around the site indicated by the sacred books, he could find no trace of the spring. His belief was, that there had been at the place no such spring as is described in the sacred books, and he told me as a reason for this belief, that the place in question was found devoid of all trace of bitumen which was found by him in the adjacent hot springs.†

* Kali Charan Roy was dewan of the Chittagong Collectorate from 1785 to 1790. He was one of the farmers with whom Mr. Godwin concluded the Settlement in 1774. On the 5th January, 1786, Mr. Crofts, who at that time was Collector of Chittagong, sold his right, title, and interest in the island of Moiscal, for Rs. 40,000 to Kali Charan Roy. The latter was succeeded in the property by his widow Probhabaty, who did not die till 1826. She had no children of her own, but adopted one Chundy Churn, who died in 1820, leaving a son, Shorut Chunder. Shorut being a minor, the estate came, on Probhabaty's death, under the Court of Wards. Shorut Chunder died recently, and the present zemindar is his son, Koilash Chunder. *Vide* Mr. Cotton's Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong, pages 165-6, and page 223.

† When this paper was read before the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Mr. V. Ball remarked that though it may be true that there never was a hot spring in the locality mentioned, the absence of any trace of bitumen was no proof of its non-existence. *Vide* Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for March, 1881, page 51.

Captain Pogson described Sitakund* as "of pure limpid water," though Bárabakunḍa is the only spring he actually visited. He, however, subsequently obtained information of the other springs, and sent a careful person to bring a description and some bottles of water from each. The following account quoted by Captain Pogson from a *Gazetteer* is noteworthy :† "About twenty miles to the north of Islamabad is a remarkable hot well (named Seetacoond), the surface of which may be inflamed by the application of fire. Like all other remarkable phenomena of nature, it is esteemed sacred by the Hindoos, as is likewise another hot spring near to Monghir." As will presently be seen, the spring of Sitakund is described in the *Devipurana* as hot-watered and igneous, which agrees with the above extract from the *Gazetteer*. But as Sitakund is also the name of the outpost containing all the groups of springs and shrines at the locality, I think it is unsafe to conclude, that the specific spring Sitakund existed at the time when the passages above referred to were written.‡ If the

* Captain Pogson's Narrative during a Tour to Chateegaon, p. 204.

† Ibid, page 99.

‡ The popular belief is, that the spring of Sitakund is still in existence. In his clever novel, called Chandranath after the god on the Chandrasekhara hill, the second edition of which appeared last year, Baboo Khettra Pal Chakravarti makes the hero visit Sitakund (p. 203) in 1266 B. S., that is, about 25 years ago. All old persons, however, who have visited the place, agree in saying that the spring has not been in existence for a much longer time. Baraba-

spring existed in 1831, at the time when Captain Pogson wrote his Narrative, it must have been destroyed in recent times. But the destruction of a spring, held in such an esteem by the Hindoos, would not have failed to attract the notice of the authorities. I am not aware of any official report regarding the destruction of the spring.

The following account is given in the *Devipurana** of the shrine, and of its destruction:

40-41.—The Rishis said: We have heard before of Sitakund, situate on the mount of Chandrasekhara, a spring known throughout India, which is the purifier of the three worlds. If thou hast any kindness for us, O sun of knowledge, do thou tell us of it, and thereby dispel our ignorance; for about this people ask of us.

42-3.—The Suta replied: For the performance of

kunda, and not Sitakund, is about 20 miles to the north of Chittagong.

* ऋषय ऊचुः ।

सीताकुण्डं श्रुतं पूर्वं त्रिलोकजनपावनम् ।
चन्द्रशेखरमध्यस्थं भारताख्यासमन्वितम् ॥ ४० ॥
यदि तेऽस्ति कृपा नाथ तद्वद ज्ञानभास्कर ।
अस्माकमज्ञानम् हर लोके पृच्छा यदीदृशी ॥ ४१ ॥

सूत उवाच ।

सीताख्यानविधानार्थं लोकानाम् पावनाय वै ।
सदागुरुं सदाराध्यं नत्वा कृष्णन्तु विनिर्मितम् ॥ ४२ ॥
वाडवाग्निविनिश्वस्तु निस्रमुच्छोदकं द्विजाः ।
ज्ञातपचायितं द्रुमैः सर्वोपवनसन्निभम् ॥ ४३ ॥

Sita's ablution, O twice-born ones, and for the purification of men, was made that spring, the most secret and beautiful, volcanic, deep, hot-watered, surrounded by trees as by an umbrella, forming one continuous grove.

44.—In that lake bathed Sítá, born of the Earth, with her husband and brother-in-law, and devoutly offered oblations to her favourite deity.

45.—There also bathed the lions among the twice-born, as also the chiefs of sages and Munis, who have attained perfection, dwelling to the north of it.

46.—What account shall I give of this spring, the most sanctifying of all? I shall only recount its merits: listen to me, O most excellent of the twice-born.

47.—When Ráma, debarred from accession to his father's throne, had gone to the hermitage of Sarabhanga, he went, in accordance with his direction, to a city lying towards the north-east.

यत्र सीता पृथिवीजा स्वामिना देवरेण वै ।
स्नाता तत्र ह्रदे देवमिष्टं सम्पूज्य यत्नतः ॥ ४४ ॥
स्नानं चक्रुः द्विजव्याघ्रा मुनिसिद्धन्दारकास्तथा ।
सिद्धा महर्षयः सन्ति तस्योत्तरनिवासिनः ॥ ४५ ॥
किं वक्तव्यं कुण्डमेतं महापुण्यविधायकम् ।
वक्ष्यामि तस्य माहात्म्यं शृणुध्वं द्विजपुङ्गवाः ॥ ४६ ॥
राज्यभ्रष्टो यदा रामः शरभङ्गाश्रमं ययौ ।
तदुपदेशं धृत्वा तु पूर्वोत्तरपुरीमगात् ॥ ४७ ॥

48-9.—In that city he saw a revered sage, versed in the knowledge of *Tirthas*, a veritable ocean of knowledge, long-armed, clad in yellow garments, and with matted hair. As soon as he saw him, he reverently saluted him with a meek heart, and enquired of him, "Why dost thou, O Lord, live here alone, besmeared with ashes?"

50-51.—That sage, whose whole body was besmeared with ashes, then opening his eyes, saw Rama, the holy, the eternal, the best of men, accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, and thus addressed him:

52.—"I have heard that thou hast taken thy birth in the line of kings, only for our liberation from the dire bonds of the world.

53-4.—"How great is thy fortune, who art followed

पश्येत् पूज्यं महावाहुं जटामण्डलधारिणम् ।
पीतवस्त्रपरीधानं तीर्थज्ञं ज्ञानसागरम् ॥ ४८ ॥
दृष्ट्वा नत्वा च पप्रच्छ भक्त्या विनयमानसः ।
कथमत्र स्थितं देवमद्वैतं विभूतिपरम् ॥ ४९ ॥
ततश्चक्षुरुन्मीलयित्वा दृष्ट्वा रामं सनातनम् ।
जानकीलक्ष्मणाभ्यान्तु पवित्रं पुरुषोत्तमम् ॥ ५० ॥
अवोचत्तं रघुवरं स मुनिर्विभूतिधरः ।
श्रुतं राजन्यवंशे तु जन्ममात्रप्रतिष्ठितम् ॥ ५१ ॥
अस्मान् पवित्रकरणे घोरसंसारबन्धनात् ।
भावज्ञानं मुक्तिं कुर्व्वन् लोके जन्म प्रकाशितम् ॥ ५२ ॥
दृश्यं सीता इयंवीजा कल्पिंविच्छिवसंहिता ।
सुराराध्या मुक्तकेशी चापवर्गप्रदायिनी ॥ ५३ ॥
यस्यानुगामिनी देवी तस्य भाग्यं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।
समुद्रस्योत्तरे तीरे भारताख्यासमन्विते ॥ ५४ ॥

by this Sita, born of the Earth, with her hair unbound, the dispenser of salvation, worshipped even by Siva.

55.—"On the north side of the Indian Sea, there is a spring bearing her name, well known throughout India, which is the purifier of the three worlds. Know her not merely as thy wife. Verily she is Yoganidrá herself.

56.—"Deeds unaccomplishable by thee can easily be achieved by her; she is destined by the Fates to humiliate thy pride (to eclipse thy glory).

57-60.—"It is through my good fortune alone, O Rama, that thou hast come here with her. On the mount of Chandrasekhara, southwest of this country, was built by Siva, a spring of her name. Behold that spring, Sitakund, glowing with fire, situate on the west of S'ambhunath, south of the Vayu hills, north of

अस्या नाम्ना कुण्डमस्ति त्रिलोकजनपावनम् ।
न तव गृहिणी राम योगनिद्रेयमिष्यते ॥ ५५ ॥
तवाग्रकं कर्म्म यद्वा अनयावलीलाहृतम् ।
तवाभिमाने नष्टे तु विधिनैषा नियोजिता ॥ ५६ ॥
मम भाग्यवशाद्राम अनया समुपस्थितः ।
प्राचीदक्षिणयोर्मध्ये श्रीचन्द्रशेखरे गिरौ ॥ ५७ ॥
तव भर्गेण तन्नाम्ना कुण्डमेकं नियोजितम् ।
खयम्भुपश्चिमे विप्रास्तद्वायुगिरिदक्षिणे ॥ ५८ ॥
नाभिगङ्गोत्तरे चैव फल्गुपश्चिमतः स्थितः ।
ज्योतिर्मयाधः प्रतीच्यां वाड़वाग्निसमन्वितम् ॥ ५९ ॥
पश्येह तु मदाकुण्डं सीतानाम्ना नियोजितम् ।
सीता शीतलयुक्ता या सेयन्ते सहचारिणी ॥ ६० ॥

Nábhigangá, west of the Phalgu, below Jyotirmaya. That Sita is thy cheering consort."

61-3.—Thus speaking, the excellent sage fixed his eyes on them. Greatly wondering, Rama passed the night there with his wife and brother, and at dawn visited Chandrasekhara in the company of the well-wishing Muni who, on arriving there, went into the spring, and facing the sun chanted the two-lettered mantra.

64-66.—Then, leaving Rama at the place, there stepped into the spring Sita, the primitive energy, the revealer of the seat of Brahma, adored by Ananta and other gods, blue as a cloud, ever complacent, three-eyed, red-lipped and fair-haired, her form glowing with fire, adorned with eight hands, and surrounded with banner and chámara (yak-tail).

इत्युक्त्वा तं मुनिवरः परस्परं विलोकयेत् ।
उषित्वा रजनीमेकां रामचन्द्रोऽतिविस्मृतः ॥ ६१ ॥
प्रभातायान्तु शर्वर्यां भ्रातृजायासमन्वितः ।
ययौ श्रीचन्द्रशेखरं मुनिना परमेष्ठिना ॥ ६२ ॥
गत्वा मुनिवरस्तत्र कुण्डमध्ये व्यवस्थितः ।
सूर्य्याभिमुखमास्थाय जपन्मन्त्रञ्च द्व्यक्षरम् ॥ ६३ ॥
रामं विहाय सा सीता कुण्डमध्ये व्यवस्थिता ।
नीलजीमूतसङ्काशा भुजाष्टपरिशोभिता ॥ ६४ ॥
केशवल्लम्बिनी देवी चरणाधरसङ्गिनी ।
लोचनत्रयसंयुक्ता ध्वजचामरवेष्टिता ॥ ६५ ॥
अनन्तादिभिराराध्या ब्रह्मपीठप्रकाशिका ।
आदिशक्तिः सुप्रसन्ना मन्त्रवाङ्मयरूपिणी ॥ ६६ ॥

67.—Standing on the margin, Rama saw Sita immersed in the spring. Believing the spring to have destroyed her, dear to him as life, he addressed these words to the Muni:

68-9.—"This spring shall remain in existence for the first four thousand years of the Kali age, and shall after that time vanish from the sight of man. Whoever out of devotion will drink the water, shall obtain the same fruit as may be got by immersion, and shall not live any longer upon earth."

70-71.—Saying this, the foe of Rávana went to the Mani hill. Having viewed the linga and bathed in the Lavanákhya, he gratified the sage with humble and respectful words, and then returned to Chandrasekhara.

तटस्थो राघवः पश्येत् सीतां कुण्डनिवासिनीं ।
मम प्राणेश्वरं कुण्डं विधाय रघुवंशजः ॥ ६७ ॥
सम्बोध्य तं मुनिवरमिदं वचनमब्रवीत् ।
कलेश्चतुःसहस्राणि वर्षाणि स्थास्यतेऽयतम् ॥ ६८ ॥
स्थितं कुण्डं गुप्तमासीत् मानवाद्दर्शनं भवेत् ।
भक्तिं कृत्वा तु सीतायाः यः कश्चिद्वा जलं पिबेत् ॥ ६९ ॥
कुण्डस्नानफलं प्राप्य न पुनर्वर्त्तते भुवि ।
इत्युक्त्वासौ रावणारिर्मणिपर्व्वतमूर्द्धनि ॥ ७० ॥
गत्वा दृष्ट्वा शिवलिङ्गं स्नपणाम्भो निमज्जयन् ।
आगत्य चन्द्रशेखरं प्रणम्य मुनिसत्तमं ।
सन्तुष्टवतयामास रामोऽपि विनयान्वितः ॥ ७१ ॥

72.—Then Rama, delighted, started with Sita and his brother, for the banks of the Godávarí.

According to the above account, Rama, having visited the hermitage of Sarabhanga, by his direction turned towards a north-eastern city, where another sage informed him, that on the south-west of that city, there was a sacred spring of the name of his consort Sita (Sitakund), who, he was informed to his surprise, was no other than Yoganidra herself. Rama is then said to have visited this spring in the company of his wife and brother and the learned sage. Finding Sita immersed in the spring, whither she had gone to bathe without his knowledge, Rama thought she had been drowned, and cursed the spring as the destroyer of the princess. According to the malediction which, be it observed, is not to have immediate effect, the spring would cease to be visible to human eyes, at the end of four thousand years of the fourth age. The *Çhinnamastá Tantra* is, however, ready with another explanation of the origin of the shrine and of its disappearance.* It

सीतामादाय सधाता भिन्नाञ्जनचयोपमां ।
जगाम परमाह्लादः पुनर्गोदावरीं प्रति ॥ ७२ ॥
इति देवीपुराणे वैष्णवाख्ये चण्डिकाखण्डे शिवरहस्यकथने
श्रीश्रीचन्द्रशेखरप्राप्तिरहस्योऽध्यायः ।

* सीतानामभिसमं कुण्डं पातालं कुण्डमुत्तमं ॥
सीतापरीक्षणार्थाय तत्पूर्वेऽग्निः चचार ह ।
ततः शशाप सा सीता परीक्षानलतापिता ॥

relates that the spring was the scene of the ordeal by fire of Sita, that it was excavated by the hand of the great Hanumat, and that it was cursed by Sita herself as the site of her sufferings. The explanation itself is, however, less important than the manner of its narration. Sita is not described there merely as Yoganidrá herself, or the Primeval Sakti or Energy, and Rama the divine hero who would curb the pride of the Rakshasas. They are the veritable Supreme Duad, the spiritual guides of Siva and his consort who came over to the shrine to offer their oblations. The spiritual guide, according to Hindoo ideas, it is well known, is the embodiment of the Deity itself on earth. The recognition accordingly of Rama and Sita as the spiritual guides of Siva and his consort is significant. A tradition has been mentioned above, which attributes the filling up of the spring to a dispute between the Sivaites and Vishnuvites. It would therefore seem, that this second legend was probably written at a period of Vishnuvite supremacy.

युगान्तेनाखिलं सर्वं दह्यते तेन वह्निना ।
सीताक्रोपानलो यत्र कुण्डन्तत्र विचक्षणं ॥

* * * * * * ।

यत्नेन निर्मितं कुण्डं परीक्षार्थं हनूमता ।
कुण्डपार्श्वचरो भूत्वा तिष्ठति हनुमान् बली ॥

इति छिन्नमस्तातन्त्रे महाकालीसम्वादे पार्वतीमन्त्रप्रकरणे
स्थाननिर्णयो नाम द्वितीयः पटलः ।

However it may have been, apart from the contradictory nature of the two accounts which in itself furnishes a strong argument against their authenticity, both of them—internally incoherent and contradictory as they are—have not the impress of the high authority of Valmiki, the most ancient writer on the life and deeds of Rama, and perhaps the one, who in consequence describes them with the nearest approach to truth. It is true that a few places in the Chittagong Division bear the name of Rama, so that it might apparently seem that the prince had something or other to do with them. There is, for instance, Ramoo, where it is said Rama commenced the Setubandha bridge, but, preferring not to enter by the postern gate the capital of Ravana (to which the bridge would have led him, had he gone that way), he turned round, and constructed a separate bridge at Rameśvara to lead him to the front gate of the metropolis of Ceylon. In the *Pāṭál Puri* (*lit.* the nether world), in a cavern in the hill of Chandranath to which reference will presently be made, a huge stone is pointed out as the cooking utensil of Sita. Similarly, a place or two in the adjoining districts of Noakhally and the Hill Tracts, may be mentioned as bearing the name of Rama and his wife. This reason, however, does not commend itself as very conclusive. For it is a fact that may be well established by numerous instances, that the Brahmins took delight in associating shrines

with renowned names in their religious history, in order to ensure and enhance their sanctity.* Regarding Rama alone, thus we read of the Doobrajpore rocks far off in the district of Beerbhoom, consisting of stones that fell off from his aërial chariot on his return from the Himalayas, when he had gone up there to fetch stones for the construction of his bridge to Ceylon. Adjacent places are shown, as where his wife Sita sat and bathed. A boulder in the neighbourhood is also pointed out, as having been caused by Ravana's attending a call of nature.† In the same way, Rama's advent is also claimed for the province of Orissa, (wrongly identifying it with *Kishkindhyá* mentioned in the Ramayana), where the Rajah of Cuttack up to this time wears a tail in all public receptions, more as a testimony to his descent from the monkey allies of the great hero, than by way of vindication of Mr. Darwin's theory. There are

* "The hot springs of India have attracted the notice of many observers. In the majority of instances these remarkable outbursts of water, at a temperature considerably above that of the waters, or even of the atmosphere in the neighbourhood, often charged with various gases and emitting strong odours, have been endowed by the superstitious and ignorant with wondrous virtues, or have been supposed to be the result of some miraculous interposition of divine energy." Dr. Oldham on the Thermal Springs of India, page 1, Part II, Vol. XIX. Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India.

† A List of the Objects of Antiquarian Interest in the Lower Provinces of Bengal, compiled at the Bengal Secretariat under the orders of the Government of India, pages 4-6.

several places bearing the name of King Bálí, the brother of Sugríva, who was treacherously killed by Rama; *Bálikáti*, a river; *Bálikánta*, also a river; *Bálisahi*, a village. There is also a festival called *Báli Játrá*. The *Sabdakalpadruma* also mentions a hill at the place called *Kishkindhya*.* Against this identification—plausible as it is—is the unfortunate situation of the river Pampá (in Mysore) which Rama is said to have visited, before entering *Kishkindhyá* the kingdom of the monkeys which, it would seem, coincided nearly with the present kingdom of Mysore.

It is not improbable, therefore, that the above legends of Sitakund are another of those religio-historical forgeries so common all over India. Certain it is, that Rama's journey southwards was made through the middle of the Deccan and not through Orissa and the Coasts, much less through Chittagong and Sitakund; the following being the most important places in the hero's itinerary as described by Valmiki: the Tamasá, the Vedasrúti, the Gomati, the Ganges, Batsyadesa, Prayága, Chitrakuta, the Mandákini, Dandaka, the Godavari, Krauncha, the Pampa, Rishyamuka, Kishkindhya, and Ceylon. There is absolutely no mention, in the great epic of Valmiki, of Rama having gone so far north-eastward as Chittagong, after having visited the hermitage of Sarabhanga.

* किष्किन्धः पुं चोत्तरदेशस्थपर्व्वतविशेषः। Sabdakalpadruma, p. 579, Vol. I.

The narrative of this visit is contained in Canto V of Book III. When Rama was about to enter the hermitage of this sage, he saw with the Rishi, Indra the Dreaded Thunderer, in all the paraphernalia of his high office, who disappeared on Rama's nearer approach. Replying to Rama's question, the Muni said that the lord of heaven had been to his hermitage to escort him to heaven, but that the Muni could not comply with his request and leave the earth, before seeing Rama, to whom he offered all the merits of his long penance so that the prince by virtue of them might ascend to heaven. Rama, of course, declined the gift, and requested the sage to point out a meet place for his home. The following is his reply:

"Sutíkshna's woodland home is near,
A glorious saint of life austere,
True to the path of duty; he
With highest bliss will prosper thee.
Against the stream thy course must be
Of this fair brook Mandákiní,
Whereon light rafts like blossoms glide;
Then to his cottage turn aside.
There lies thy path, but, ere thou go,
Look on me, dear one, till I throw
Aside this mould that girds me in
As casts the snake his withered skin.*"

* Griffith's Ramayana, Vol. III, Book III, Canto V, Page 21.

On the sage giving up the ghost, the holy men who dwelt around flocked to Rama, and solicited his protection against the Rakshasas, which he readily granted. We now come to the Seventh Canto in which Rama is then made to visit this hermitage of Sutíkshna. After the exchange of proper greeting, Rama said :

"But now O saint, I pray thee tell
Where I within this wood may dwell,
For I by Sarabhanga old
The son of Gotama, was told
That thou in every lore art wise
And seest all with thy loving eyes.'*

In reply to this, the sage begged Rama to take his abode at his hermitage. Rama passed the night there. On the following morning he asked leave of the sage, and prayed for his permission to explore the Dandaka. The sage answered as follows :

"Go with thy brother, Rama, go,
Pursue thy path untouched by woe :
Go with thy faithful Sita, she
Still like a shadow follows thee.
Roam Dandak wood observing well
The pleasant homes where hermits dwell,
Pure saints whose ordered souls adhere
To penance rites and vows austere."†

* Griffith's Ramayana, Vol. III, Book III, Canto VII, Page 28.
† Griffith's Ramayana, Vol. III, Book III, Canto VIII, Page 32.

Thus it is clear, that there is no mention whatever in the *Ramayana*, of Rama having passed through Chittagong on his way downwards to the Deccan. The geographical position itself of Chittagong and of the Godavari (to the banks of which Rama in the above legend is said to have bent his way on leaving Chittagong), renders it quite improbable. The attribution of the ordeal by fire of Sita to a hotspring is not a new idea.* The Sitakund of Monghyr is similarly credited with being the scene of the same ordeal, which, it is scarcely necessary to say, really took place at Ceylon, if the father of Aryan poetry is to be believed. The principle of human nature which led to this religious fabrication, is not, however, inexplicable. "I think it is in Macedon," reasoned Fluellen,† "where Alexander is porn. I tell you captain,—if you look in the maps of the 'orld, I warrant, you sall find in the comparisons petween Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, is poth like. There is a river in Macedon; and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth;

* In p. 209, Part I, Vol. XVII of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, General Cunningham mentions a spring called Sitakund in Kelat, which is nine miles from Dwara, and five from Monali. In Mr. Duncan's account of the Travels in Ceylon, of a Fakeer named Praun Poory (p. 39, Vol. V of the Asiatic Researches), it is stated that "our traveller states that leaving this tank, he proceeded on to a station called *Seetakund*, where Rama placed his wife Seeta on the occasion of his war with her ravisher Ravan."

† Shakespeare, King Henry V, Act IV, Scene VII.

it is called Wye at Monmouth; put it is out of my prains, what is the name of the other river; put it is all one, 'tis alike as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both."

It is not a little remarkable, that Sitakund, the name of a spring which, no matter whether it existed or not, now exists no longer, should (*lucus a non lucendo*) give its name to the outpost, and surpass the surrounding shrines in fame. Perhaps during a period of temporary Vishnuvite supremacy, it may have been indiscriminately used for, and may have eventually supplanted, *Panchakrośa* which, according to the sacred books, contain all the holy shrines of the place. Like the *Panchakrośi* of Benares, it stretches over 5 kroses (or 10 miles) round the village of Sitakund, being bounded* on the east by the Mandakini, on the west by Vyasakunda, on the south by Bárabakunda and on the north by the Champaka Forest. "This land called Panchakrośa," said Vishnu,† "is the cause of the holy Nirvana. Many a

* पश्चिमे व्यासकुण्डञ्च पूर्व्वे मन्दाकिनी स्मृता।
उत्तरे चम्पकारण्यं दक्षिणे वाड़वानलः॥
एतत् क्षेत्रं मया प्रोक्तं पञ्चक्रोशं महाफलं।
इति वाराहीतन्त्रे नारायणीनारायणसंवादे चन्द्रशेखर-
वर्णना नाम षष्ठः पटलः।

† पञ्चक्रोशमिदं प्रोक्तं शिवनिर्वाणकारणं॥
एतस्मिन्नन्तरे सन्ति कुण्डान्यन्यानि सर्व्वतः।
दुर्गोत्थानि प्रयत्नेन मम प्रीतिकराणि च॥

Ibid.

spring is contained in it, most sacred and delightful to me." By far the most frequented of these shrines are Vyásakunda, Bárabakunda, Lavanákhya, and the temples of Chandranath and S'ambhunath.

The following account is given in the *Devipurana** of the origin of the shrines of Chandranath and of Vyasakunda.

26-27.—"Do thou tell us, O chief of the Brahmins," said the Rishis, "why Siva, forsaking Kasi and Kailas, resides here in secrecy? Why he said, 'I shall dwell on the mount of Chandrasekhara in the Kali Yuga;' and why thy preceptor remains there, abandoning all else?"

28-29.—"In days of yore," the Suta replied, "seeing the three worlds animate and inanimate, pervaded by the sea of curd, and immersed in the waters of causation, the three-eyed lordly spirit created Brahmá and Vishnu for the purposes of creation.

* ऋषय ऊचुः ।

वद विप्रेन्द्र तत्सर्व्वं कथं गूढ़त्वमागतः ।
विहाय काशीं कैलासं कस्मात् श्रीचन्द्रभूषणः ॥ २५ ॥
कलौ तिष्ठामि इत्युक्तं श्रीचन्द्रशेखरे नगे ।
कथन्ते गुरुणचैव चास्तेऽन्यत् सकलं त्यजन् ॥ २७ ॥

सूत उवाच ।

पुरा दधिसलिलेन व्याप्तं त्रिभुवनं वरं ।
कारणसलिले मग्नं ब्रह्माण्डं सचराचरम् ॥ २८ ॥
दृष्ट्वा तथाविधं सर्वं भगवान् भूतभावनः ।
ससर्ज्ज ब्रह्मविष्णू च सृष्ट्यर्थं त्र्यम्बकः स्वयम् ॥ २९ ॥

30-31.—"Thus created, they, infatuated with vanity, considered themselves supreme, and genitor even of the womb from which they themselves had sprung. Even in his very presence they spoke slightingly of him. Then the god, disappearing, became an image of light.

32-35.—"From the sky he then addressed the ignorant gods thus: 'O lotus-born, of the thirteen lingas planted in Kási and other places, I have spoken to you of twelve. Only one I have concealed from thee. During the Kali Yuga, O lotus-born, I shall dwell there with Párvatí. There is no doubt of this. Do thou follow us thither with the never-dying gods.' Thus saying, Siva with Umá vanished from their sight, and went to that place.

भूत्वा तौ तस्य निकटेऽहङ्कारेण विमोहितौ ।
ऊचतुस्तौ स्वगर्भञ्च स्रष्टारौ नौ बभूवतुः ॥ ३० ॥
अवदन्तौ तस्य प्रमुखे ततः सोऽपि न दृश्यते ।
अन्तर्हित्वा तदा सोऽपि ज्योतिर्लिङ्गं तदाभवत् ॥ ३१ ॥
अज्ञानवन्तौ तत् तौ च उवाच गगनस्थितः ।
येषु येषु च स्थानेषु मल्लिङ्गं स्थापितं मया ॥ ३२ ॥
चयोदशविभागेन काश्यादिषु च पद्मज ।
द्वादशं कथितं तुभ्यं लिङ्गमेकं जुगोप च ॥ ३३ ॥
कलौ तिष्ठामि तत्रैव पार्वत्या नात्र संशयः ।
यूयं गच्छत तेष्वेव गमिष्येऽहन्तु तत्र च ॥ ३४ ॥
गमिष्यथ ततः पश्चादमरैस्तत्र पद्मज ।
इत्युक्त्वान्तर्हितः शम्भुस्तत्रागाद् उमया सह ॥ ३५ ॥

36-37.—Even now the linga may be seen there, called Haragauri. The sinless place remained very secret in the first three ages. For the weal of men, the bull-drawn god dwells in the Kali Yuga in that sacred place with the never-dying ones."

Having thus premised the presence in the sacred place, of Siva and his consort, of Brahmá, Vishnu, and other gods, the story then runs as follows:

38.—Once on a time Vyasa, the son of Parás'ara, the subduer of his passions, began to practise asceticism in the company of the wise residents of *Kasi* (Benares), full of beatitude, knowing the Supreme Spirit, and wearing matted hair.

39-42.—Seeing him the son of Matsyagandhá, of unknown lineage, caste, and character, seated with

अद्यापि दृश्यते लिङ्गं हरगौरीति संज्ञकम्।
तत् चियुगे चातिगुह्यं आसीत्तीर्थञ्च चानघं ॥ ३९ ॥
कलौ प्रकाशरूपेण लोकानान्तु हिताय वै।
सकलैश्चामरैस्तीर्थे वसन्नं (?) तं दृषासनम् ॥ ३७ ॥
एकदा व्यासदेवोऽपि काशीक्षेत्रनिवासिभिः।
तपः कर्तुम् समारेभे पाराशर्य्यः परन्तपः ॥ ३८ ॥
महानन्दनिमग्नैस्तैर्जटामण्डलधारिभिः।
तपसा धौतकलुषैः ब्रह्मविद्भिर्विवेकिभिः ॥ ३९ ॥
शिवज्ञानाम्बुभिः सर्वं प्लावितं जङ्गमादिकम्।
दृष्ट्वा तैस्तं महाप्राज्ञं नारायणमिवापरम् ॥ ४० ॥
जातिशीलविहीनं तं मत्स्यगन्धात्मजं शुचिं।
एकासनसमायातम् एकचेत-निवासिनम् ॥ ४१ ॥
कुलहीनं छलं तच्च मुनीनामिव तिलकम्।
क्रियते च तदा कोपो व्यासाय क्षेत्रवासिभिः ॥ ४२ ॥

themselves on the same seat, and dwelling in the same holy place, although he was very wise, the ornament of the sages, like unto Vishnu himself, the ire of the holy dwellers was roused against Vyasa.

43-44.—Full of jealousy, Bhrigu addressed to him the following words: "Who art thou? Whence dost thou come? Whose son and of what family art thou? Where didst thou formerly dwell? Speak the truth."

45-46.—Vyasa replied: "I am the son of Parasara by Matsyagandhá. I have come here to see you, and to worship the god Visvanath. I would dwell with you, O sages of good actions. Let a seat amongst you be granted to me."

47-48.—While he was thus speaking, Vyasa was interrupted by Bhrigu with these angry and unseemly words: "Hear, O ye Munis, the account of his

नवो भृगुपतिस्तन्तु प्रोवाचेर्ष्यायुतं वचः ॥ ४३ ॥

भृगुरुवाच ।

कस्त्वम् कुत इहायातः कस्य सूनुः कुलञ्च किम् ।
कस्मिन्निवसतिः पूर्वं वद सत्यं वचश्च नः ॥ ४४ ॥

व्यास उवाच ।

पराशरस्तुतोऽहम् वै मत्स्यगन्धोदरोद्भवः ।
युष्माकं द्रष्टुम् इहायातो विश्वनाथस्य सेवया ॥ ४५ ॥
युष्माभिस्तु सहावासं करोमि मुनिपुङ्गवाः ।
साधुभिः कृतकर्मभिर्दीयतां क्षितिरुत्तमा ॥ ४६ ॥
इत्येवं वाच्यमानस्तु वचोभिस्तु समन्ततः ।
निरस्तो भृगुणा व्यासः कामक्रोधविवर्द्धिभिः ॥ ४७ ॥
मत्स्यगन्धासुतस्त्वं हि शृणु वाचः कुलोज्झितः ।
शृणुध्वं मुनयः सर्वे यस्य जन्मप्रकीर्त्तनम् ॥ ४८ ॥

birth, and thou too, the son of Matsyagandhá, the disgrace of thy family, listen to my words.

49-53.—"While thy mother, begotten of a fish and with a fishy smell, was a ferry-woman in the Jumna, Parasara one day came to the bank of the river and entered her boat. To the Muni's sight she immediately appeared to be endowed with beauty and grace, breathing perfume, a soul-ravishing maid of sixteen. Seeing her, the Muni became full of desire. Thou art the offspring of this union, and art neither a Kunda, nor a Golaka. How canst thou presume to practise asceticism with us? Go to thy own proper place. Thou shouldst not tarry here for a moment."

54-56.—Hearing these insulting words, Vyasa, the son of Satyavati and Parasara, being irate, thought of sacrificing himself to Siva (thus making Siva

यदा ते जननी चासीत् यमुनायां धृपेश्वरी।
मीनजातात् गन्धयुता तरणीग्रहीता सती ॥ ४९ ॥
दैवात् पराशरश्च चागत्य यमुनातटं।
आरुह्य तरणीं तस्याः मुनेर्दृग्गनतः क्षणात् ॥ ५० ॥
सुमध्या सुरसा साति बभूवातिमनोरमा।
सुगन्धा षोड़शाब्दीया रूपलावण्यसंयुता ॥ ५१ ॥
दृष्ट्वा तां सच कामात्मो रतिमग्नः क्षतत्रया।
तचोद्भवोऽसि सः प्राज्ञः न कुण्डः न च गोलकः ॥ ५२ ॥
सोऽस्माभिरूर्ध्वं तपः कर्तुम् अत्रोऽसि कथमच च।
गन्तव्यं तव स्वस्थानं न स्थेयं क्षणमच च ॥ ५३ ॥
०श्रुत्वा पराशरसुतो वचस्तदात्मनिन्दकम्।
वधं शिवाय दास्यामि चेतसोदम् विभाव्य च ॥ ५४ ॥

guilty of his death), and said, "O vile and false Siva, holder of the trident, blue-throated, and hide-garmented, why dost thou appear *Asiva* or inauspicious to me? Why dost thou harass me so often? This very day I will leave this place."

57.—When he the subduer of his passions was so minded, the bull-drawn and blue-throated god made himself manifest to him the chief of the wise men, and spoke as follows:

58-60.—"Certes thou art a portion of mine, O subduer of thy passions, and learned in the cause of things. There is a seat of mine on Mount Chandrasekhara, very secret, and unattainable even by the gods. There in Chandrasekhara I will always reside in the Kali Yuga with Uma.

अहो शिवाशिवं मे च वर्त्तते मूलधृक पुनः ।
कथं विड्म्बनं मे ते नीलकण्ठाजिनाम्बर ॥ ५५ ॥
इतो गच्छामि अद्यैव पामराज्ञानवञ्चक ।
अमर्षाविष्ट इत्युक्त्वा व्यासः सत्यवतीसुतः ॥ ५६ ॥
क्षेत्राद्विर्यदा गन्तुम् मनश्चक्रे परन्तपः ।
तदा वृषासनः साक्षादभवत् तस्य पूर्वतः ॥ ५७ ॥
उवाच तं ज्ञानिवरं नीलकण्ठो वृषध्वजः ।
न सन्देहो मदंशस्त्वम् शृणु वाचं परन्तप ॥ ५८ ॥
क्षेत्रं मेऽस्तीह गुह्यं तत् देवानामपि दुर्लभम् ।
महारण्यं महागुह्यं श्रीचन्द्रशेखरं मुने ॥ ५९ ॥
देवाभिरक्षितं क्षेत्रं नाग्निकोणेऽस्ति तज्ज्ञवित् ।
सदा कलौ च यास्यामि उमया चन्द्रशेखरे ॥ ६० ॥

61-68.—"Know, O Sage, that Chandrasekhara surpasses all other sacred places. It is covered on all sides with branches of trees, which protect it from the sun and rain. The *kokilas* sing there with sweet voice. In the recesses of the forest dwell the sages, their looks probing the Inmost Cause of the universe; Brahmá and other gods bathe there day and night; and in the hermitages dwell the Rishis, Yakshas, Gandharvas, and Bhairavas. In that forest are trees with flowers and fruits of the six seasons. The forest itself is in one place very deep and secret, and in another place rocky, like the moon half-eclipsed. On the south-west of the forest, O subduer of thy passions, is the Sindhu (the Ocean), the King of all *tirthas*, to whose embrace the sacred

सर्वक्षेत्राधिकं विद्धि श्रीचन्द्रशेखरं मुने ।
सर्वतो द्रुमशाखाभिश्छादितं वारितातपं ॥ ६१ ॥
वनप्रियादिभिश्चव कूजितं मधुरैः स्वरैः ।
ज्ञानिभिश्चव्रदृष्टैश्च स्रोयते गह्वनान्तरे ॥ ६२ ॥
यत्र ब्रह्मादिभिश्चव स्नानं चक्रे अहर्निशं ।
ऋषयश्च सगन्धर्वा यक्षाश्च भैरवास्तथा ॥ ६३ ॥
सिद्धा महर्षयो यत्र नित्यमासन् तदाश्रमे ।
षड्ऋतु-फलपुष्पाद्यैः पादपाः सन्ति तद्वने ॥ ६४ ॥
अप्रकाशञ्चातिगुह्यं वनं सर्वर्तुशोभनं ।
अन्ये नगविशेषे यत् प्रत्यासन्नार्द्धचन्द्रवत् ॥ ६५ ॥
तस्य दक्षिणतः सिन्धुस्त्रीर्थराजः परन्तप ।
यस्य संसर्गमायाता गङ्गा भागीरथी द्विज ॥ ६६ ॥
यथा हिमाद्रिर्मे स्लाघ्यः तथा श्रीचन्द्रशेखरः ।
श्रीचन्द्रशेखरे देवैः सदा स्थास्यामि हे मुने ॥ ६७ ॥

Ganga offers herself, led by Bhagiratha. As the Himalaya is dear to me, so is Chandrasekhara. There shall I, O Muni, dwell with the gods."

Thus instructing Vyasa, the god then made himself manifest to him in his own proper form which is described at length in the text.

74-78.—"In his own form, O Munis, he then said to Vyasa: "Go there, O most excellent of sages, subduer of thy passions, where I shall dwell with Uma. Thou shalt attain all thy desires; have no doubt about thy success. That seat of mine is the giver of health and wealth, and after death, of salvation. There also dwells the rice-giving Annapurna, delighting in rice and nectar. In this seat of perfection shall I dwell, the lord of Parvati." Saying this to the Muni, the god disappeared.

इत्युपदेशं तस्मै च स बभूव परन्तपः ।
शुद्धस्फाटिककुन्देन्दुप्रतिमः कुण्डलोज्ज्वलः ॥ ७८ ॥
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रतैः रूपविशेषैस्तु भगवानुमया सह ।
वसामि तत्र हत्युग्रं व्यासाय मुनिपुङ्गवाः ॥ ७४ ॥
तत्र गच्छ मुनिश्रेष्ठ मच्चित्तोऽग्रे परन्तप ।
यदाभीष्टं प्राप्स्यसि त्वं सत्यं सिद्धिर्न संशयः ॥ ७५ ॥
मतूक्षेत्रं शिवदं स्वस्मन्ने च मांसदायकम् ।
अन्नपूर्णा निवसति सदान्नरूपधारिणी ॥ ७६ ॥
तत्र च सुलभाक्षे क्षेदन्नब्रह्मविलासिनी ।
स्वयम्भूतं शिवपीठे वसन्तम् (?) पार्वतीपतिम् ॥ ७७ ॥
इत्युक्त्वान्तर्दधे शम्भुः मुनये ज्ञानशालिने ॥ ७८ ॥

79-81.—As Nárada had ascended the Srísaila hill, even so went Vyasa, the son of Satyavati, to Chandrasekhara, hearing these words of Siva. There he began to practise asceticism, his mind always concentrated in meditation, repeating the five-lettered mantra, sometimes covered with snow, sometimes near a fire, sometimes fasting altogether, absorbed in Pránáyáma, all his thoughts devoted to the meditation on god.

82.—Pleased at seeing him so devoted, the Self-created then appeared to him. "Ask for a boon," he said, "O subduer of thy passions."

83-85.—Having heard this, Vyasa then replied with folded hands—"When the Munis residing at Kasi spoke scornfully to me, it was by thy command O Lord, that I came here. Dwell thou here, as was thy command while in Kasi. This is the dear boon that I ask of thee."

ततः सत्यवतीसूनुः श्रुत्वा वाक्यं हरस्य तु ।
ययौ श्रीचन्द्रशेखरं श्रीशैले नारदो यथा ॥ ७९ ॥
गत्वा तपः समारेभे सदा च ध्यानमानसः ।
हिमजालावृतः क्वचिदुताग्निसमीपतः ॥ ८० ॥
निराहारः कदा शैवे तद्भावभावनागतः ।
प्राणायामगतः क्वचित् पञ्चाक्षरमनुं जपन् ॥ ८१ ॥
दृष्ट्वा तपोरतञ्चैव स्वयम्भुर्हर्षमागतः ।
भूत्वा प्रत्यक्षमवदत् वरं ब्रूहि परन्तप ॥ ८२ ॥
तत् श्रुत्वा भगवान् व्यासः कृताञ्जलिपुटोऽब्रवीत् ।
गृहितं मे यदा देव मुनिभिः काशीवासिभिः ॥ ८३ ॥
तवोपदेशाद् गन्तव्यमत्रैकेन मया विभो ॥ ८४ ॥
कृतं यथोपदेशं मे काशीस्थेन महात्मना ।

86-87.—"Do thou, O sage," the god answered, "remain on the mount Chandrasekhara near the ocean, as the guardian deity of this holy place, and make thyself the saviour of the three worlds by planting over it all the *tirthas*, such as Gaya and others, that exist on the face of the earth. May all thy desires be successful."

88-89.—With these words, the god, while yet in the presence of Vyasa, pierced the earth with his trident. Then there arose a spring full of water, with igneous brilliance in the interior, and covered with smoke.

90-93.—Delighted at this sight, Vyasa assumed the

तथा भवान् गिरिश्च देहि चैवं वरं सुहृत् ॥ ८५ ॥
सप्ततीर्थैस्त्वया च तीर्थाधिष्ठितविग्रहः ।
तिष्ठ सिन्धुसमीपे च श्रीचन्द्रशेखरे मुने ॥ ८६ ॥
गयादीनीह तीर्थानि यानि सन्तीह भूतले ।
तान्यत्र स्थापयित्वा तु त्रैलोक्यतारणं कुरु ॥ ८७ ॥
सिद्धिर्भवतु वेऽभीष्टा इत्युक्त्वाशे कृपानिधिः ।
स तस्य पश्यतः शम्भुः त्रिशूलेन विखन्यते ॥ ८८ ॥
सोऽपि कुण्डात्ततिर्भूत्वा वारिपूर्णो बभूव ह ।
तस्मान्नरेऽग्निना दीप्तिः त्रियते धूमवेष्टितः ॥ ८९ ॥
दृष्ट्वानन्दमतो व्यासस्तस्य पश्यितः स्वयम् ।
परं ध्यानगतस्त्वासे धृत्वा पाषाणविग्रहम् ॥ ९० ॥
द्विभुजमुपवीतञ्च जटामण्डलधारिणं ।
चर्माम्बरपरीधानं कवीन्द्रैः सेवितं स्वयम् ॥ ९१ ॥
यस्य भाषाखिलमिदम् वेदसारसंस्थितं जगत् ।
वेदागम-महासिन्धुं निर्मथ्य ज्ञानदण्डकैः ॥ ९२ ॥
पुनातु स तु त्रैलोक्यं चर्माधर्मप्रकाशकः ॥ ९३ ॥

इति देवीपुराणे चैत्रमासतो स्वयम्भुरत्नकथने चण्डिकाखण्डे सप्तदशोऽध्यायः ।

form of stone, and became absorbed in meditation on its west side. Even now he may be seen there, two-handed, wearing the sacred thread, and clotted hair, clothed in deer-skin, the expositor of virtue and vice, who, churning the ocean of Vedic literature with the rod of his knowledge, for the first time explained the whole universe according to the dictum of the Vedas. Let him purify the world."

Such was the origin of the shrine of Chandranath and of Vyasakunda. As in the legend of Sitakund the spring is to vanish from human sight at the end of four thousand years of the Kali Yuga, so in this legend also the shrines are to be manifest to human eyes at the commencement of the same Yuga. In both cases, great names in history have been brought forward to father the foundation of the shrines. Rama, it is known, is the deified hero of the Ramayana. Vyasa, according to the late Mr. Sherring,* has two or three temples dedicated to him in Benares; but he is not generally considered to be a deified hero. Nevertheless, no name is so distinguished in the whole field of Indian history as the name of this sage. To him is ascribed the compilation of the Vedas and Puranas. To him is attributed the fatherhood of the fathers of the Kauravas and the Pándavas. It is no wonder, therefore, that the sage should have been made to

* Sherring's Sacred City of the Hindus, p. 118.

play the part that he has been made to play in the foregoing passage. This, however, is not the first time, that he has been credited with the ambition of founding a shrine. The *Annadámangala* relates a like attempt on his part. Expelled by Siva from Kaśi (Benares), Vyasa began to practise extremely mortifying austerities, in the hope of raising a shrine that would, in every respect, surpass the Kaśi of Siva. He had well nigh succeeded in his object, when Uma, Siva's consort, one day appeared before him in the guise of an old, deaf, and decrepit woman, and asked him what merit a man would acquire by dying at his *tírtha*. Vyasa replied that the man would obtain salvation. But still the old woman pretended not to have heard his answer, and repeated the question again and again. Vexed at this, Vyasa said that the man would become an ass, who died there. Siva's consort, then assuming her own form, said "so be it," and vanished from the place.* The later attempt of Vyasa to found a *tírtha* in Chittagong appears to have been more successful. He not only succeeds in conciliating Siva, but also obtains from him the much-desired boon. "Do thou, O sage," the god is made to have said, "remain on

* ডাকিয়া কহিলা ক্রোধে কাণের কুহরে।
গর্দ্দভ হইবে বুড়ী এখানে যে মরে॥
বুঝিনু বুঝিনু বলি করে চাকি কাণ।
তথাস্তু বলিয়া দেবী কৈলা অন্তর্ধান॥

Annadámangala, p. 158. This legend is based on the Kasikhanda of the Skanda Purana.

the mount Chandrasekhara near the ocean, as the guardian deity of this holy place, and make thyself the saviour of the three worlds by planting over it all the *tírthas*, such as Gaya and others, that exist on the face of the earth. May all thy desires be successful."

The pilgrim to the shrines of Sitakund generally takes up his quarters at the lodging-houses of the Adhikáriṣ, a class of Brahmins, who send out emissaries called Pándás to almost every district of the Lower Provinces, in order to persuade people to undertake a pilgrimage to these shrines. These Pándás serve as guides to the pilgrims, and, in the shape of remuneration, get from the Adhikaris their passage-money as well as a portion, generally the fourth part, of their eventual gain; for the Adhikaris, besides the rent of the lodging-houses, also receive whatever the pilgrim offers to the gods, clothes, cows, horses, palkis, silver and gold ornaments,—the *kar* or the visiting cess, which consists of eight annas only under the District Magistrate's orders, being paid to the Mohunta for the maintenance of the shrines. The earnings of the Adhikaris average Rs. 5,000, and sometimes rise to Rs. 10,000. They have now-a-days found competitors in people of other castes, who also have set up lodging-houses of their own. The most opulent Adhikaris are Ramahari Adhikari, Chandrasekhara Adhikari, Gopínath Adhikari, and Akhil Chandra Adhikari. Hinduism is, however, at a discount in Chittagong.

The few Brahmins that may be found there, are certainly not the ornaments of the learned class. Some excellent rules were framed by Mr. Kirkwood, lately Magistrate of Chittagong, for the construction and ventilation of the lodging-houses. These, together with a hospital erected near the local bazar, have served to prevent the spread of disease which, in former days, used to originate and spread around, from the large concourse of people that assembled at the *melas*. The Adhikaris have now to take out licenses from the Magistrate to lodge pilgrims, which are refused, if their lodging-houses do not conform with the prescribed rules.

Settling himself in one of these lodging-houses, the pilgrim proceeds to bathe in the *Vyásakunda* referred to above. This is a small tank, 120 × 90 hands, full of mud and shrubs, the water being so impure that one would abhor the touch of it. I was informed that, small as the tank was, it was believed that no one could swim across it, or throw a stone from one side of it to the other. After bathing in the *Kunda* which, however, does not indicate any signs of being of an igneous nature as related in the legend translated above, the pilgrim makes offerings to the *Bata* (*Ficus Indica*) tree, underneath which Vyasa is said to have performed the Asvamedha sacrifice.* This tree

* ——————————वटसमीपतः ।
यत्राश्वमेधमकरोद्व्यिभिर्वेदरायणः ॥
इति श्रीवाराहीतन्त्रे श्रीनारायणीनारायणसंवादे
तृतीयः पटलः ।

represents the primeval Bata tree, under which the great Vishnu rested before the creation. It serves as the veritable "door-keeper" of the god Chandranath, and is the presiding deity of the plain below.* It is said never to grow old, and to flower in all seasons for the worship of the god. The pilgrim throws upon the tree-deity clods of earth, of which it is said to be very fond, and circumambulates it. The temple of Vyasa is pointed out, lying on the margin of the spring in a very dilapidated state.

Thence the pilgrim proceeds to the temple of *S'ambhunáth*, or Svayambhunáth, the Self-created Lord. As you proceed, the mount Chandrasekhara appears before you in full majesty. You feel a presence. No wonder that they said that the gods resided there. Are the Munis still meditating there on God, under the tall pine-trees? Are the gods and nymphs disporting themselves on the hillocks? All the old Hindu associations force themselves on you despite your Western education. The feeling, however, fades away, when you come to the site of the Sítákund mentioned above. According to the *Varahi Tantra*† there are five Kundas at this place called

* ॐ वटुकः खातिदक्षस्य नन्दीशचंचनायकः ।
निर्विघ्नं कुरु देवेश पञ्चलोकप्रियः सदा ॥
वटुनाम्नो महाहस्तः ईश्वरद्वारपालकः ।
इति श्रीवाराहीतन्त्रे श्रीनारायणीनारायणसंवादे
हतीयः पटलः ।

† ततः पूर्वपथाहत्या वायुपर्वतसन्निधौ ।
सप्तमे विष्णुदेवस्य क्रमदीशस्य पश्चिमे ॥

Sítákunda, Rámakunda, Lakshmanakunda, Brishakunda and Nábhikunda. Sítákund, as related above, is no longer in existence. Small holes are, however, pointed out as the other Kundas. Near them, in an old temple are the images of Ráma, Sítá, and Lakshmana. These are stone figures, very awkwardly done, unlike the graceful idols of Calcutta.

Jyotirmaya consists of flickering tongues of volcanic flames in the right side of the ascent to the temple of Sambhunath. The flames, it is said, disappear altogether at the touch of the impious. When we visited Jyotirmaya, we found that it had been completely put out; and it was not till the Mohunta of Sitakund, who was acting as our *cicerone*, brought another light in contact with it, that the tongues could be lighted again. It is said that the flames move about from place to place, sometimes appearing in the temple of Sambhunath, sometimes in other places, and at times burn a whole forest.

पञ्चकुण्डान्वितं स्थानं परमं ब्रह्मदायकम् ।
दृषकुण्डं परं यस्य प्राग् ज्योतीश्वरात्मकम् ॥
ततः ब्रह्मादयः सुराः नित्यं तिष्ठन्ति चानघे ।
पातालादुत्थिता देवी गङ्गा तत्पूर्वतः क्रमात् ॥
तज्जलं स्वर्गनादेवि सर्वपापान् प्रमुच्यते ।
तस्योत्तरदेशस्थं नाभिकुण्डं मनोहरम् ॥
तस्योत्तरसमस्थाद्यं (?) रामकुण्डं मनोहरम् ।
लक्ष्मणस्य तथोदीच्यां सीतायाः कुण्डमुत्तमम् ॥

इति श्रीबाराहीतन्त्रे श्रीनारायणनारायणी-
संवादे चतुर्थः पटलः ।

The Mohunta told us that, on one occasion when he was coming down from the temple of Chandranath, he was overtaken and scorched by the flames which suddenly appeared in great force, on the way between him and the temple of S'ambhunath. When we visited Chandrasekhara, we found that a considerable portion of the forest on both sides of our way, had been recently burnt down by the fire. Some portion or other of the range of mountains always exhibits traces of the flames. At night, we witnessed an extensive conflagration on a distant hillock. Lord Teignmouth was probably referring to Jyotirmaya, when he wrote the following: "On the side of a hill distant about three miles from the burning well (Barabakunda), there is a spot of ground, of a few feet only in dimensions, from which flashes of fire burst on stamping strongly with the foot. The appearance of this spot resembled that of earth on which a fire had been kindled. I do not recollect whether it was hot to the touch."*

The linga *S'ambhunáth*, the self-created lord, is said to form part of the body of the hill. A tradition is told that one of the kings of Tipperah made great endeavours to dig it out from the shrine, in order to carry it over to his capital, but without success. He was directed, it is added, by the god to content himself with the goddess Tripurásundarí, whom he accordingly took over to his kingdom.

* Lord Teignmouth's Memoirs of Sir William Jones, Vol II. p. 56.

In the history of Tipperah written by Baboo Kailas Chandra Sinha,* we certainly read of king Kumára having gone to visit a linga in Syámalanagar, which the historian considers to be identical with Chittagong. We also read of his grandson king Taksharao, who was a devout worshipper of Siva, but had failed to obtain a son through the influence of the god, having wounded the god in his feet. Offended at this treatment, the god is said to have left Tipperah. But it is also related that king Taksharao then propitiated the irate god with a human sacrifice, and got two sons by his influence. It is not impossible, that this statement may have connexion with the attempt to transplant the linga Sambhunáth; but an old officer belonging to the Chittagong Collectorate informed me, that the belief that the linga formed part of the body of the mount was groundless,—it being a movable stone having artificially imprinted on it in wax the marks of natural lingahood†—and that the temple was purposely kept dark to avoid detection. Mr. Caspersz, the Assistant Magistrate, who was deputed in 1879 to superintend the *Siva Chaturdasí* mela, proposed

* Babu Kailas Chandra Sinha's Chronicles of Tipperah, p. 5.

† नानाच्छिद्रसमायुक्तं नानावर्णसमन्वितम् ।
खण्डमूलं यज्ञिङ्गं कर्कशं भुवि दृश्यते ।
तच्छिद्रन्तु खयम्भूतमपरं लक्षयोजनम् ॥
इति सिद्धान्तमेखरः ।

Vide p. 257 of the Pránatoshiní.

to the District Magistrate the opening of an aperture in the dome, to serve as a skylight which would prevent people from looking in, as well as give light and air. The well-meant suggestion could not, I believe, be carried out, as it was necessary to avoid what might have been misunderstood as uncalled for interference on the part of Government. The temple of Sambhunáth was erected down below in the plateau of the hill, as the ascent to that of Chandranath is not practicable throughout the year, especially in the rainy season which is somewhat long in that part of the country, owing to its being hilly. It consists of two apartments. In the outer apartment are the Bhairava, Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanumat, Annapurná and others. The presiding deity is in the inner apartment, and is of course, very superior. "The sight of the face of Kramadísa (another name of Sambhunáth) saves one from future birth."* The linga is of a cylindrical form, about four inches in diameter, and rising about five inches from a cone, the base of which has been walled around.

In the court-yard of the main temple of Sambhunáth are many minor shrines crumbling to decay. There is a temple of *Káli*, the dread consort of

* क्रमदीशमुखं दृष्ट्वा पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ।
इति श्रीवाराहीतन्त्रे नारायणीनारायणसंवादे
चन्द्रशेखरवर्णना नाम षष्ठः पटलः ।

Siva; a mandir of *Jagannáth*, and *Rádhá Krishna*; and *mount Govardhana* so well known in Brindávana. Close by are the eight Bhairavas, and the burial places of some of the Mohuntas of Sitakund. On the left, after passing S'ambhunáth, is a sacred spring with *pucca* sides called *Gyákunda*,—which is considered equal in merit to the famous shrine at Gaya,—where the pilgrim shaves and bathes, and offers oblations to the manes of his ancestors. Proceeding upwards, the path becomes a mere track, with no attempt at being a regular road such as leads up to S'ambhunath. We now come to the base of mount *Chandrasekhara*. The grand staircase—consisting of about 575 steps, and generally supposed to have been built by one of the kings of Tipperah,—which brings the pilgrim to the temple of *Chandranáth* at the top of the Chandrasekhara hill, is giving way a little here and there; and unless repaired in time, will render the ascent more difficult in future than in the days before their construction. Chandrasekhara* is the highest peak in Chittagong, being 1155 feet in height, and is situate in the centre of the Sitakund range which, commencing from the

* Chandranáth is the name of the god. The peak is called Chandrasekhara. It is also sometimes called Chandranáth. Dr. Hunter also calls it Chandinath. Although Chandinath is another name of Siva, I have never heard the hill called by that name. It is, however, usual to use Chandranath and Sitakund as synonymous terms.

northern end of the Sudder station of the district, runs without interruption to Tipperah, parallel to the Grand Trunk Road. In the *Nirvána-tantra** it is mentioned as one of the *Kulaparvatas* or principal mountains of India. Wilson in his Dictionary erroneously places it in Arracan. "In the hill of Sitakund there is a stone of two descriptions, one apparently of volcanic formation, and porous, the other solid containing iron." The hill is "formed of a stratum inclined at an angle of 30° north-east and south-west, of hard clay in places; and in others of sandstone. The surface is generally covered with loam, but on the southern slopes of all the outskirting hills, it is red sandstone or sand.†" The original temple on this peak, built by a king of Tipperah, fell down in the cyclone of 1848, when the present structure, which is of smaller dimensions, was erected by Ram Sundar Sen, a rich merchant, who has since fallen from his high estate. The temple has little pretensions to artistic beauty. But the view around the peak was exceedingly beautiful. A ship that was sailing far off in the Bay of Bengal, appeared like a bird slowly flying on the horizon. The

* नीलाचलं मन्दरञ्च पर्व्वतं चन्द्रशेखरम् ।
हिमालयं सुवेलञ्च मलयं भस्मपर्व्वतम् ।
चतुष्कोणे वसेद्देवि एतत् सप्तकुलाचलम् ॥
इति निर्व्वाणतन्त्रे सर्व्वतन्त्रोत्तमोत्तमे हरगौरी-
संवादे योगविवरणं नाम चतुर्थः पटलः ।

† Statistics of the Lower Provinces of Bengal for 1868-69, p. 25.

ascent of the hill itself, it is said, gives salvation.* The god, however, is an ordinary linga. Sitakund was, as stated before, visited by Sir Joseph Hooker. The following is an extract from the account given by him in page 352 of Vol. II of his Himalayan Journals: "The road to the top of Seetakund leads along a most beautiful valley, and then winds up a cliff that is in many places almost precipitous, the ascent being partly by steps cut in the rock of which there are 560 (?). The mountain is very sacred, and there is a large Brahmin temple on its flank; and near the base a perpetual flame bursts out of the rock. This we were anxious to examine, and were extremely disappointed to find it a small vertical hole in a slaty rock, with a lateral one below for a draught, and that it is daily supplied by pious pilgrims and Brahmins with such enormous quantities of ghee (liquid butter), that it is to all intents and purposes an artificial lamp; no trace of natural phenomena being discoverable." I do not know to what flame Dr. Hooker thus alludes. Jyotirmaya is at the foot of the hill, and is also visited by pious pilgrims. But there can be no doubt that it is a natural phenomenon.

In order to visit *Virupáksha*, a phallic symbol of

* श्रीचन्द्रशेखरारोहे मुक्तिमाप्नोति मानवः ॥
इति श्रीवाराहीतन्त्रे नारायणीनारायणसंवादे
चन्द्रशेखरवर्णना नाम षष्ठः पटलः ।

Siva (similar to Chandranath and Sambhunath, mentioned above), in a temple situated midway down the descent from Chandrasekhara, the pilgrim descends by a north-east route. Many proceed to Chandranath after visiting Virupáksha. The ascent to this temple from the foot of the mountain is not a pleasant affair. Sometimes you have to take a long leap, holding in your hand the frail root of an old tree. If it gives way, you are at once precipitated into the abyss below, which seems unfathomable. On his way to Chandranath from Virupaksha, the pilgrim visits *Unakoti Sivalinga* in a picturesque spot called *Pátála Puri*, or the nether world, covered with green foliage, and full of the beauties of nature. The undulations in the rocky surface of the cave, drenched with water issuing from the sides of it, are pointed out as Unakotí or 99 lacs of Sivas. What Mr. Sherring said of its prototype in Benares applies to this: "The actual number cut out on the superficies of the stone is not more than a few hundred; but the Hindoos are not particular in their definition of numbers."* Descending from Virupáksha, we meet the former road again at the *Mandákiní*. This stream is considered to be identical with the river in heaven of the same name. It is said that the Ganges on starting from the Himálaya divided itself into three streams, one running through heaven called Mandákiní, another

* Sherring's Sacred City of the Hindoos, p. 100.

flowing on earth called Gangá, and the third Bhogavatí, which is in the nether world. The water of the stream is certainly very clear, cool, and sweet.

Of the other shrines, *Bárabakunda* is a volcanic well. It is about three miles' journey southwards from the Sitakund village, and is situated in the same range of hills. Báraba fire, according to ancient mythology,* originated from the anger of the Muni *Aurva*, whose mother's womb was about to be ripped open by the Kshatriyas. It was deposited in the bed of the sea, to prevent it from burning the three worlds. It is stated in the *Varahi Tantra*† that Baraba is the veritable fire which sprang from the third eye of Siva and destroyed Káma, and that it is to burn down the three worlds at the final annihilation. The same Tantra also relates that the spring s four cubits square, with tepid water, and th at the

* ततस्तं क्रोधसञ्जातं और्व्वोऽग्निं वरुणालये ।
उत्ससर्ज स चैवाप उपयुङ्क्ते महोदधौ ॥ २१ ॥
महदयशिरो भूत्वा यत्तद्वेदविदो विदुः ।
तमग्निमुद्गिरद्वक्त्रात् पिबत्यापो महोदधौ ॥ २२ ॥
इति श्रीमहाभारते आदिपर्व्वणि चैत्ररथपर्व्वणी-
र्व्वोपाख्यानेऽशीत्यधिकशततमोऽध्यायः ।

हयशिरः = वड़वामुखम् । इति भारतभावदीपाख्यभारतटीकायां नीलकण्ठः ।

† योगनेत्राग्नसञ्जातो जलमध्ये च दुर्व्वहः ।
कामो भस्म च संनीतो येन नेत्राग्निना पुरा ॥
त्रिलोकं दह्यते येन समुद्रश्चैव शुष्यते ।
युगान्ते दह्यते येन ब्रह्माण्डं सचराचरम् ॥
वाराह्याम् सप्तमः पटलः ।

fire consists of seven flames.* The following account of the spring is given by Lord Teignmouth:† "The burning well is situated about twenty-two miles from Chatigan, at the termination of a valley surrounded by hills. I visited it in 1778, and, from *recollection*, am enabled to give the following account of it:—the shape of the well, or rather reservoir, is oblong, about six feet by four, and the depth does not exceed twelve feet. The water, which is always cold, is supplied by a spring, and there is a conduit for carrying off the superfluity; a part of the surface of the well, about a fourth, is covered with brick-work, which is nearly ignited by the flames, which flash without intermission from the surface of the water. It would appear that an inflammable vapour escapes through the water, which takes fire on contact with the external air; the perpetuity of the flame is occasioned by the ignited brick-work as, without this, much of the vapour would escape without conflagration. This was proved by taking away the covering of brick-work after the extinction of the heat, by throwing upon it the water of

* तस्य दक्षिणतो देवि कुण्डं वाडवसंज्ञकम्।
ज्वालाग्ने विद्यते कुण्डं चतुर्हस्तं सुशोभनम्॥
सप्तजिह्वात्मको वह्निः सुस्निग्धेश्वरसन्निधौ।
तज्जलौषदुष्णञ्च सदाग्निः शिवरूपिणः (?)॥
वाराह्याम् सप्तमः षष्ठः।

† Lord Teignmouth's Memoirs of Sir William Jones, p. 55.

the well. The flames still continued to burst forth from the surface, but with momentary intermissions and the vapour was always immediately kindled by holding a candle at a small distance from the surface of the water. A piece of silver placed in the conduit for carrying off the superfluous water, was discoloured in a few minutes, and an infusion of tea gave a dark tinge to the water."

Compare with the above, Captain Pogson's description of the spring—"In front is a building about thirty feet square, over the spring; the descent to it, by a flight of steps, is about fifteen feet; the rising heat was like that of a hot bath. Flames, in successive flashes, were playing on the surface of the water, which, from a column of perpetually rising bubbles, appeared to be boiling. The air they contained, ignited as it came in contact with an oven-like furnace, which the flames fed, and rendered, on one side red-hot. The heat of this self-ignited furnace rendered the surface of the water tepid, but it is naturally cold. In order to condense, and thereby perpetuate, the flames, about one-half of the spring is built over, with an aperture in the centre of the arch, through which, looking from the terrace above, the flames are seen playing on the water. Persons bathing, took in their hands and on their clothes the water with the flame burning on it. The uncovered part is a square of less than five feet, and the covered part about the same di-

mensions. The water is brackish, sulphureous, and chalybeate. A servant drank as much of it as he could hold in both hands united, twice filled, and was so severely purged, that he remained behind, and laid down until its effects went off ..... The water of the Balwa koond has an exhilarating effect, occasions a slight headache, and a sensation of fulness, which soon go off. Its effects are diuretic, slightly aperient, and creative of hunger."*

The well outside the Kunda, formed by water issuing from the spring, is called *Básikunda*. Here the devotee first bathes and purifies himself. He then bathes in the Bárabakunda itself inside, and offers *bel* leaves and flowers to the flames to appease the burning god. It is said that at each offer of the *bel* leaves and flowers, the god roars louder to express his satisfaction. Close by are *Dadhibhairava*; the temple of *Jvalakáli*; and the spring of *Kumárí*.

At a nearly similar distance and similarly situated is *Lavanákhya*, the Nuolukka of Captain Pogson and the Naldala Khya of Statistical Report of 1868-9, which differs from Barabakunda in the weakness of its flame and in the increased saltness of its water. The salt-water is used for cooking purposes, though it is said that the salt cannot be eliminated from the water. A tradition prevails that this was tested

* Captain Pogson's Narrative during a Tour to Chateegaon, p. 203.

by Mr. Harvey* when he was Collector of Chittagong, and that he accordingly discharged some persons arrested for illicit manufacture of salt. The water, it is said, cures goitre. Around Lavanákhya are the following: *Dadhikunda*, a small well fed by the stream issuing from Lavanákhya; *Gurudhvani*, another Jyotirmaya; *Brahma Kunda*, a hot spring on the top of a small hill, east of Lavanákhya; *Suryakunda*, a phenomenon similar to Lavanákhya and Bárabakunda.† Near Lavanákhya a place is shown as where the right arm of Sati, the consort of Siva, fell, cut by the discus of Vishnu. But no idol is seen there, and it is not held in the same veneration as Kálighat, Kámákhyá, and similar places.

Dr. Oldham thus epitomizes Captain Pogson: "There are seven other springs within a circle of

* Mr. John Inglis Harvey was Collector of Chittagong from 1831 to 1837, with short intermissions, during which he acted as Commissioner of the Division. *Vide* Mr. Cotton's Memorandum on the Revenue History of Chittagong, pp. 118-121.

† There are Mohuntas at the temple of Sambhunath, Bárabakunda, and Lavanákhya. Of these, the Mohunta of Sambhunath is the richest and the most well-known. He is generally called the Mohunta of Sitakund. The present Mohunta of Sitakund, whose name is Kis, or Ban, is a young gentleman of excellent manners, and of good education. He is also the Mohunta of Adinath, in the island of Moiscal. Of this god the same story is told as of that at Vaidyanath, near Deoghur. The Mohuntas have to take a vow of celibacy, and are succeeded by their principal disciples.

six miles, called Nuolukka (Lavanákhya), Kooaree (Kumári Kund), Dadhee (Dadhi), Burma (Brahma), Suruj (Súrya), Chandur (Chandra), and Seeta (Síta). Nuolukka is warm, vapour ignites on the application of flame, saline; Kooaree is hot, saline, sulphureous, and chalybeate; vapour ignites. Dadhee, water is cold, salt. Burma (Brahma?) very hot and saltish, slightly chalybeate, vapour ignites. Chandur or Chander is on a hill, salt and exceedingly hot ('said to have appeared within the last four months') ignites; Seeta is pure and limpid.*"

From Lavanákhya the pilgrim proceeds to *Sahasra-dhárá*, a cataract. The water falls beautifully in thin streams, so as to form a natural shower-bath, from a height of about 400 feet. This is by far the most picturesque and romantic of all the various and wonderful sights of Sitakund. It is customary for pilgrims to stand under it. The water of Sahasra-dhárá is considered to be Siva himself. One cannot forget the bath at Sahasradhárá. It is said, that on the words "bom bom," which are peculiar to Siva, being pronounced, the water falls with gradually increasing force.

The places noted before are those generally visited by pilgrims. There are many others, for the *locale* of which the curious and the religious will refer to the *Váráhí Tantra*, the Bradshaw of the shrines of

* Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India, Vol. XIX, Part II, p. 59.

Sitakund. From what has been said above, the reader who has had patience to follow us to the end of this book, will, it is trusted, be convinced of the recent character of these shrines. There is a sustained effort to plant on this place all the *tírthas* which are held in esteem by the Hindoos. For the most famous shrines of Benares, of Gaya, of Brindavan, of Puri, and other places, miniature *tírthas* are pointed out in Sitakund.* The remarkable phenomena which nature presents in the place, have aided the fabrication of superstitious interpolations and forgeries. The sacred writings, which have been quoted before, bear evident indications of the alternate supremacy of the Sivaites and the Vishnuvites, and of the gradual multiplication of the shrines esteemed by each sect. But the belief in their sacredness is firm, deep-rooted, and universal. A man who holds a different opinion, is looked upon as irreligious and sacrilegious, even in Chittagong, where Hindooism is at a discount. Whether on account of their recent establishment, or from any other cause, the shrines have not received attention at the hands of the antiquarian and the scien-

* There seems to be no end of places called Sitakund. In p. 23 *ante* and footnote, it has already been stated that there are three more Sitakunds, besides the Sitakund in Chittagong, *viz.*, those at Monghyr, Kelat, and Ceylon. In pages 22 and 35 of Vol. XVI of Cunningham's Archæological Report, there is mention of another Sitakund situate on the River Gandak in Tirhut.

tist. In these pages they have been described by a layman. But the antiquarian and the scientist will be able to ascertain the time when these shrines were first established, and how they gradually expanded. They will be able to ascertain the effect of the waters of the several springs, and analyze the medicinal virtues, which they are believed to possess. They will be able to ascertain the extent of the Hindoo occupation of the district, and of its conquest by the king of Tipperah. They will, in short, be able to complete the ancient history of Chittagong, which is now so meagre and unsatisfactory.